

WORK 4 WOMEN EXPLORING HIGH-WAGE NONTRADITIONAL CAREER OPTIONS



A publication by Wider Opportunities for Women
Created in 1997
Updated 2006

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Wider Opportunities for Women

Introduction

Work4Women was launched by Wider Opportunities for Women to provide tools, strategies and a virtual community to help increase women and girls' integration and retention in high-wage jobs that are considered nontraditional for women. Nontraditional occupations (NTOs) are jobs in which women comprise 25% or less of the workforce (U.S. Department of Labor).

Work4Women (formally work4women.org) was designed to:

- Interest [women](#) and [girls](#) in training for high-wage, nontraditional occupations
- Help [women working](#) in nontraditional occupations remain and advance in their careers
- Inform [workforce development professionals and educators](#) of effective methods to train, place and support women in nontraditional occupations

Project Funding was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau and Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training *Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) Act grant*.

Engaging women in Nontraditional occupations remains a method for women to better achieve self-sufficiency. The materials have been updated and broken down into a variety of useful documents now available on WOW's website www.wowonline.org under National Programs.

Wider Opportunities for Women

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) is a national organization that has been helping women and their families achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity since 1964.

WOW's intergenerational vision and mission of economic independence for women and girls is met by working nationally and in its home community of Washington, D.C. on policies and programs that promote equality of opportunity for low-income women. WOW has helped women learn to earn, with programs emphasizing literacy, technical and nontraditional skills, welfare-to-work transition, career development, and retirement security. Since its founding, WOW has prepared more than 10,000 women and girls for well-paid work in the D.C. area.

Through our national Family Economic Self-Sufficiency (FESS) Project, we work with thousands of organizations in more than 35 states to design programs and policies that put low-income, working families on the path to economic independence. A cornerstone of that work is the development and implementation of the Self-Sufficiency Standard, a localized measure of how much income it takes for working families to make ends meet without public or private subsidies of any kind.

More recently, WOW has launched the national Elder Economic Security Initiative™ (EESI™) program. The national EESI™ program seeks to build economic security for older adults through a multi-pronged approach that includes organizing, advocacy and research. The national EESI™ program is an initiative to enable policy makers, aging advocates and others develop policies and programs to help seniors age with dignity while promoting their economic security. A key component of the initiative is the Elder Economic Security Standard™ index, a measure of well-being that determines the income and supports needed for older adults to live modestly depending on their health and life circumstances.



Seeking Nontraditional Occupations

If you are woman seeking nontraditional employment this information can help you:

1. Explore High-wage, Nontraditional Career Options
2. Train for High-wage Nontraditional Occupations
3. Learn how to Find and Obtain High-wage Nontraditional Employment
4. Address Challenges to Obtaining and Remaining in Nontraditional Employment

Nontraditional Occupations (NTOs) are jobs in which 25 percent or less of the workforce is female (U.S. Department of Labor). NTOs pay 20-30% more than jobs traditional held by women and offer excellent benefits and career advancement potential.

Training for and remaining in NTO careers can lead their economic self-sufficiency, help support families and build assets to obtain a home or to pursue a higher education

Exploring High-Wage, Nontraditional Career Options

- Benefits and Challenges

Nontraditional employment offers several benefits that enable women and girls to become economically self-sufficient, support their families, and build assets to obtain a home or pursue a higher education.

The benefits of nontraditional employment for women outweigh the real and perceived challenges to working in nontraditional occupations which can be overcome with suggested strategies.

Benefits

- **Higher Wages**—Women are concentrated in a few lower-paying traditionally female jobs, while men are focused in jobs that pay higher wages. Nontraditional jobs pay 20 to 30 percent more on average than traditional female occupations. This additional income can make the difference between family well-being and family poverty.
- **Better Benefits**—Nontraditional jobs in the trades and technical fields tend to be unionized. Unions provide more member support, such as health benefits, sick leave, life insurance, pension/retirement plans and paid vacation time, than traditionally female jobs. Some employers also offer transportation assistance and educational subsidies that pay for work-related training or education.
- **Opportunity for Advancement**—Nontraditional occupations tend to have sturdier career ladders than traditionally female jobs, which translate directly into salary and job upgrades as a worker achieves higher skill levels on the job. NTOs often offer paid, on-the-job training. In contrast, many traditionally female occupations lack significant opportunities for career advancement or require additional education outside of work for promotions and salary increases. For example, an electrician can earn \$15.73 an hour as an apprentice and can then increasingly receive higher wages until, after completing the apprenticeship period and becoming a journeyman, she can earn more than double that hourly wage (\$34.97).¹

¹ *Commercial (Inside) Apprenticeship Program*. Northeast Illinois NECA & IBEW Jun 2006.
<http://www.lmccdupage.org/apprentice.htm>



- **Job Satisfaction**—Women have diverse interests and abilities. Some women simply may be less content working in traditionally female occupations, and may be unaware of their alternatives. By expanding the number of jobs they enter, women are more likely to find a closer “occupational fit” with their skills, interests and personalities. In turn, the more a woman enjoys her work, the more likely she is to continue at it. It is therefore more likely that her family, her community and her employers will benefit from her efforts.

Challenges

There are many misconceptions about women working in nontraditional jobs, see WOW's Fact Sheet on Women and Nontraditional Employment on our website www.wowonline.org. However, many real challenges exist for women working in nontraditional occupations. Women may be especially exposed to discrimination and/or harassment in nontraditional jobs. Nontraditional workplaces can be hazardous, requiring safety protocols, special equipment and protective clothing to prevent harm from accidents, extreme weather and work-related injuries. Sometimes the only woman on the job, a woman can experience isolation in a nontraditional workplace. Family and friends may not be supportive of a woman who is breaking their stereotypes about women and work. Transportation and childcare can also be significant challenges for women seeking and entering nontraditional jobs.

Occupational Overviews

In 2005, there were 66 million employed women in the U.S. However, less than 6% of these women were employed in nontraditional occupations, a number that has been steadily dropping since the early 1980s (from 7.1% in 1983 to 4.9% in 2002).²

Some of nontraditional occupations that offer the high-wages and the career advancement potential that low-income women need to move out of poverty and remain economically independent include:

- **Brick Layer/Stone Mason**
- **Computer and Office Machine Repairer**
- **Police Officer**
- **Truck Driver**
- **Automotive Technician (Mechanic)**

These select occupations have both entry-level and experienced positions in construction, technical, public service and professional fields.

Each occupational description includes information on:

- Training Process and Programs
- Employment
- Career Ladders
- Earnings
- Employers and Unions to Contact
- Women's Support Groups
- Related Occupations

²*Women in the Labor Force 2005*. US Department of Labor Women's Bureau. 1 Jun 2006.
<http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/Qf-laborforce-05.htm>



Bricklayer and Stonemason

Laying bricks and blocks is important to any home or business. Bricklayers build walls, fireplaces, chimneys and other structures with brick and blocks. Stonemasons build floors, create ornate stonework on buildings and fashion other structures with stone. If you like working with your hands and take pride in a job well done, then this may be the job for you.

As of 2005, women represented 0.9% (2,000) of the bricklayers and stonemasons (245,000) in the U.S.³

Employment as a Bricklayer or Stonemason

Bricklayers build walls, fireplaces, chimneys and other structures with brick and blocks. Stonemasons build floors, craft ornate stonework on buildings and develop other structures with stone.

Work Environment—Bricklayers and stonemasons often work outdoors. They lift bricks and blocks, sometimes work on scaffolds and kneel or bend for extended periods of time. Bricklayers and stone masons who follow proper safety practices and participate in physical conditioning exercises can avoid hazards and injuries.

Potential Employers—Once you have completed training as a bricklayer or stone mason, you will be qualified to work with a variety of employers including:

- Masonry contractors
- Building developers

Training to be a Bricklayer or Stonemason

Women interested in obtaining **entry-level work** as bricklayers and stone mason helpers can gain the required skills by observing and learning from experienced workers.

However, to advance in the field and learn safety procedures, women would need to participate in a **vocational education program**, such as an apprenticeship program. **Apprenticeship programs** offer thorough training, which includes three years of on-the-job training and a minimum 144 hours of classroom instruction each year in subjects such as blueprint reading, mathematics, layout work, and sketching. Apprenticeship programs are usually sponsored by local contractors or local union-management committees, and must be federally registered with the U.S. Department of Labor.

Apprentices often start by working as laborers, carrying materials, mixing mortar, and building scaffolds. During this period, which generally lasts about a month, apprentices become familiar with job routines and materials. Next, they learn to lay, align, and join brick and block. Apprentices also learn to work with stone and concrete. This enables them to be certified in working with more than one masonry material.

Applicants for apprenticeships must be at least 17 years old and in good physical condition. A high school education is preferable, and courses in mathematics, mechanical drawing, and shop are helpful but not required.

³ *Nontraditional Occupations for Women in 2005*. US Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Mar 2006.
<http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2005.htm>



Women who are **experienced** bricklayers or stonemasons can increase their expertise through participation in skills training for specialized brick or masonry craft (e.g., terazzo); the [national union](#) offers such training. Experienced women bricklayers and masons may also enroll in cross-training to learn about related crafts (e.g., welding). Many local unions offer such training.

Sample career ladder for a bricklayer/stonemason

An entry-level bricklayer and stonemason can advance in her career and earn higher wages as she gains more on-the-job experience and/or participates in additional training. Below is a sample career path that an entry-level bricklayer or mason can take to advance in her job (listed from experienced to novice).

Start Here

- Mason Tender or Helper
- Mason Apprentice I, II, III, IV
- Mason
- Mason Job-site Supervisor
- Mason Sub-contractor
- Mason Instructor
- Mason Inspector
- Mason Products Sales

Advance to Here

- General Mason Contractor (Factories/Office Buildings/Homes)

Training Programs

- Contact the U.S. Department of Labor State BAT or SAC office to receive a list of **all** reported apprenticeship programs in your state. (to locate an office near you visit the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training—http://www.doleta.gov/Atels_bat/, phone (apprenticeship): (202) 693-2700 and (training): (877) 872-5627.
- **International Masonry Institute Training Center Locations** call (800) JOBS-IMI or email: imitrainin@imiweb.org to find a union training program near you

Earnings as a Bricklayer or Stonemason⁴

- **Entry-Level Workers**—Apprentices or helpers usually start at about 50 percent of the wage rate paid to experienced workers.

Experienced Workers—In 2004, median hourly wages were \$20.07.

- The middle 50% earned between \$15.34 and \$25.20 an hour.
- The lowest 10% were paid less than \$11.68 an hour.
- The highest 10% earned over \$30.43 an hour.

Earnings for workers in these trades may be reduced on occasion due to factors such as poor weather or downturns in construction activity, which can limit the available working time.

Earnings vary by geographic location, union vs. non-union work, etc. To determine the going wages for these occupations in your area, consult:

⁴ *Brickmasons, Blockmasons, and Stonemasons*. US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. 20 Dec 2005 <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos201.htm#earnings>



- Newspaper ads
- Union locals (consult your phone book or the [union's national office](#))
- Local employers
- Local office of the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (to locate an office near you visit http://www.doleta.gov/Atels_bat/, phone (apprenticeship): (202) 693-2700 and (training): (877)872-5627.

Women's support groups for bricklayers and stone masons

- **International Masonry Institute Women's Hotline**—(800) JOBS-IMI and imitrainin@imiweb.org

Occupations related to Bricklayers and Stonemasons

Workers in other occupations with similar skills include:

- Concrete masons and terrazzo workers
- Plasterers
- Tilesetters

Computer and Office Machine Repairers

Computer, automated tellers, and office machine repairers install equipment, conduct preventative maintenance, and analyze and correct problems.

As of 2005, women represented 13.7% (53,000) of the computer, automated teller, and office machine repairers (384,000) in the U.S.⁵

- **Employment as a computer and office machine repairer**

Computer and office machine repairers—sometimes called **data processing equipment repairers**—are responsible for a variety of tasks including:

- Repairing computers and office equipment
- Running diagnostic programs to locate malfunctions
- Making cable and wiring connections when installing equipment

Computer repairers work on different types of equipment, such as:

- Mainframe computers and network servers
- Personal computers (workstations)
- Peripheral equipment (printers, faxes, scanners)

Office machine repairers fix other equipment, such as:

- Photocopiers
- Cash registers
- Mail processing equipment
- Fax machines
- Typewriters

⁵ *Nontraditional Occupations for Women in 2005*. US Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Mar 2006. <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2005.htm>



Some repairers service both computer and office equipment. They also make cable and wiring connections when installing equipment, and work closely with electricians who install the wiring.

Work Environment— Computer, automated teller, and office machine repairers may work at computer centers, manufacturing plants, hospitals, universities, office buildings, and telephone companies. They are employed throughout the country. However, most repairers work in larger cities where computer and office equipment is concentrated.

Computer, automated teller, and office machine repairers usually work shifts. Some work weekends and holidays to service equipment operating in business that operate around the clock. Shifts are generally assigned on the basis of seniority. Repairers may also be on call at any time to handle equipment failure.

Potential Employers—Once you have completed training as a computer and office machine repairer, you will be qualified to work with a variety of employers including:

- Wholesalers of professional and commercial equipment and supplies
- Electronics, appliances, and office supply stores
- Electronic and precision equipment repair shops

In 2004, about 35% of computer, automated teller, and office machine repairers were employed by computer and office equipment wholesalers and by firms that provided maintenance services for a fee. Others worked for retail establishments and some with organizations that serviced their own equipment.⁶

- **Career ladder of a computer and office machine repairer**

Below is a sample career path an **entry-level computer and office machine repairer** can take to advance in her job (listed from experienced to novice). Please note that this is just a sample, and that there are many different paths.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Start Here | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer and office machine repairer• Specialists or troubleshooters• Manufacturer's sales worker• Management/supervisory positions |
| Advance to Here | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engineers/ Owners of an equipment repair business |

Experienced computer repairers

With advanced training experienced computer repairers may become specialists or troubleshooters who help other repairers diagnose difficult problems. Other experienced repairers may work with engineers in designing equipment and developing maintenance procedures. Because of their familiarity with equipment, repairers are particularly well qualified to become manufacturers' sales workers. Some experienced workers open their own repair services or shops. They may also be promoted to supervisory positions. With a bachelor's degree, they may become electronic or electrical engineers or go into management.

⁶ *Computer, Automated Teller, and Office Machine Repairers*. US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook. 20 Dec 2005. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos186.htm#employ>



Office machine repairers

Advancement opportunities are often limited to increased responsibility and increases in salary. However, office machine repairers may become managers of service departments. They can also often transfer into the company's sales division. With experience, good communication skills and the ability to present themselves in a professional manner, repairers may go into business for themselves or they may be invited into partnership with their employers. They should also possess sales ability and knowledge of business practices and techniques, as well as enough capital to open a shop and purchase repair equipment, merchandise, and parts.

- **Earnings of a computer and office machine repairer⁷**

Earnings for computer and office machine repairers will vary by geographic location and union and non-union work. To determine the going wages for this occupation in your area, consult:

- Newspaper ads
- Union locals (consult your phone book or the [union's national office](#))
- Local employers

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, full-time computer, automated teller and office machine repairers earned a median hourly wage of \$16.90 as of May 2004.

- The middle 50 percent earned between \$13.11 and \$21.36 hourly.
- The bottom 10 percent earned less than \$10.31 hourly.
- The top 10 percent earned more than \$26.28 hourly.

Fringe benefits usually include: paid leave for all major holidays; paid vacations and sick leave; medical, dental, and vision plans, and life insurance and retirement plans.

- **Training to be a computer and office machine repairer**

Computer and office machine repairer is a subgroup of **Electronic Equipment Repairers**. Below is training information general to all repairers in this occupational grouping.

Most employers prefer applicants with formal training in electronics that take one to two years to complete. Electronic training is offered by several organizations:

- Public post- secondary vocational-technical schools
- Private vocational schools and technical institutes
- Junior and community colleges
- Some high schools
- Correspondence schools
- Military services

Women interested in obtaining **entry-level work** may have to pass tests measuring mechanical aptitude, knowledge of electricity or electronics, manual dexterity, and general aptitude. **Newly hired repairers**, even those with formal training, usually receive some training from their employer. They may study electronics and circuit theory and math. They also get hands-on experience with equipment, doing basic maintenance and using diagnostic programs to locate malfunctions. Training may be in a classroom or it may be self-instruction, consisting of videotapes, programmed computer software, or workbooks that allow trainees to learn at their own pace.

⁷ Ibid.



Training includes general courses in mathematics, physics, electricity, electronics, schematic reading, and troubleshooting. Students also choose courses that prepare them for a specialty, such as computers, commercial and industrial equipment, or home entertainment equipment. Repairers can participate in formal apprenticeship programs sponsored jointly by employers and local chapters of the [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers](#) or [National Electrical Contractors Association \(NECA\)](#).

Some employers may want workers certified in computer and office equipment repair. There are several certification programs in their field. **To advance in the field** and learn safety procedures, electronic equipment repairers must attend training sessions and read manuals to keep up with design changes and revised service procedures. Many technicians also seek advanced training in a particular system or type of repair.

Women who are **experienced computer repairers** with advanced training may become specialists or troubleshooters who help other repairers diagnose difficult problems, or work with engineers in designing equipment and developing maintenance procedures.

Due to their familiarity with equipment, repairers are particularly well qualified to become manufacturers' sales workers. Workers exhibiting leadership ability also may become maintenance supervisors or service managers. Some experienced workers open their own repair services or shops, or become wholesalers or retailers of electronic equipment.

- **Occupations related to computer and office machine repairer**

Workers in other occupations with similar skills include:

- [Broadcast technicians](#)
- [Vending machine repairers](#)

Police Officers, Detectives, and Special Agents

Police officers, detectives, and special agents are responsible for enforcing statutes, laws, and regulations that ensure the safety and well-being of our nation's citizens.

- **Police officers** may investigate burglaries, monitor neighborhoods and respond to emergency requests.
- **Detectives** may investigate criminal cases by gathering facts and collecting evidence.
- **Special agents** may conduct surveillance, participate in undercover assignments and protect officials.

As of 2005, women represented 14.3% (97,000) of the total police workers in the U.S. (667,000).⁸

Employment as a police officer, detective and special agent

- **Work Environment**—Police officers, detectives, and special agents work outdoors and indoors. They usually work a 40-hour week but paid overtime work is common. Shift work is necessary because police protection must be provided around the clock. Junior officers may work weekends, holidays, and nights. Police officers, detectives, and special agents could be on call at

⁸ *Nontraditional Occupations for Women in 2005*. US Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Mar 2006. <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2005.htm>



any time. In many jurisdictions, officers are expected to be armed and to exercise their arrest authority whenever necessary.

Some federal agents, such as U.S. Secret Service and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) special agents, require extensive travel, often on very short notice. They frequently relocate a number of times over the course of their career. Some police officers, detectives, and special agents with agencies such as the U.S. Border Patrol must work outdoors for long periods in all kinds of weather.

- **Potential Employers**—Once you have completed training as a police officer, detective or special agent, you will be qualified to work with a variety of employers including:
 - Local governments
 - State, county and city police departments
 - Various federal agencies including:
 - [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) (FBI)
 - [U.S. Secret Service](#), (202)406-5800
 - [U.S. Marshal Service](#)
 - [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) (DEA)
2401 Jefferson Davis Highway
Alexandria, VA 22301

Career ladder

An entry-level police officer, detective or special agent can advance in her career and earn higher wages as she gains more on-the-job experience and/or additional training. Below is a sample career path that an entry-level police officer, detective or special agent can take to advance in her job (listed from experienced to novice). See the **Training section** to learn how you can advance in your job.

Police Officer

Start Here

- Police Officer
- Corporal
- Sergeant
- Lieutenant

Advance to Here

- Captain

Detective

Start Here

- Police Officer
- Homicide Detective
- Sergeant Detective

Advance to Here

- Homicide or sergeant detective

- **Earnings⁹**

The stated earnings are based on data provided by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Handbook 2004* unless indicated otherwise. Earnings will vary by geographic location and union and non-union work. To determine the going wages for this occupation in your area, consult:

- Newspaper ads

⁹ *Police and Detectives*. US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook 3 Feb 2006 <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos160.htm#earnings>



- State or county employment offices (ask for their labor market data)
- Local employers
- Union locals (consult your phone book or the [union's national office](#))

Police Officers and Detectives

Police and Sheriff Patrol Officers—Median annual salary was \$45,210 in 2004.

- The middle 50% earned between \$34,410 and \$56,360.
- The lowest 10% were paid less than \$26,910.
- The highest 10% earned over \$68,800 a year.

Police and Detective Supervisors—Median annual salary was \$64,430 in 2004.

- The middle 50 percent earned between \$49,370 and \$80,510.
- The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$36,690.
- The highest 10 percent earned more than \$96,950.

Detectives and Criminal Investigators—Median annual salary was \$53,990 in 2004.

- The middle 50 percent earned between \$20,300 and \$37,800.
- The lowest 10 percent were paid less than \$32,180.
- The highest 10 percent earned over \$86,010.

Federal Employees (e.g., FBI Agents)

Federal employees who serve in law enforcement receive special salary rates. Base salaries are also supplemented with "overtime" and special law enforcement benefits package. Below are sample annual salaries.

- **FBI agents** start at a base salary of \$42,548.
- **Supervisory agents** start at approximately \$76,193.

Police Officer Training

Candidates for police officer training must usually be U.S. citizens of at least 20 years of age who meet physical qualifications. The appointment of police officer trainees to a position depends on their performance on written and physical examinations and experience. The physical examination often includes tests of vision, hearing, and strength.

Education Requirements—Entry-level positions as police officers usually require at least a high school-level education. Federal agencies generally require a college degree for special agent positions.

Training Providers—State, county and city police departments usually train recruits at the agency police academy.

Training Program Components—Training programs may last 12-14 weeks and include:

- Classroom instruction in constitutional law and civil rights;
- State laws and local ordinances;
- Accident investigation;
- On-the-job training in the following skills:



- Patrolling
- Traffic control
- Use of firearms
- Self-defense
- First aid
- Handling emergencies

Training for Experienced Police Officers—Women who are experienced police officers and detectives can advance in their career by increasing their skills through advanced training at:

- Police department academies; and
- Federally and state training centers for public safety.

These training centers provide advanced training in:

- Defensive tactics
- Firearms
- Use-of-force policies
- Sensitivity and communications skills
- Crowd-control techniques
- Legal developments that affect their work
- Advances in law enforcement equipment

Many agencies may pay all or part of the tuition for officers to work toward degrees in criminal justice, police science, administration of justice, or public administration, and pay higher salaries to those who earn such a degree.

Required Equipment and Uniforms—Be sure to read [Police Equipment & Uniforms Sized to Fit Women](#) by Institute for Women in Trades, Technology & Science (Note: at the bottom of linked page).

Occupations related to police officers, detectives and special agents

Occupations related to police officers, detectives and special agents are:

- [Correctional officers](#)
- [Guards](#)
- [Fire marshals](#)
- [Inspectors](#)

Truck Driver

Truck drivers operate trucks of varying sizes for short and long distances to deliver all types of cargo ranging from cars to cabbage to chairs.

As of 2005, women truck drivers represented 4.5% (153,000) of the truck drivers in the U.S (3,409,000).¹⁰

For more information about women in trucking, visit the following web sites:

¹⁰ *Nontraditional Occupations for Women in 2005*. US Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Mar 2006.
<http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2005.htm>



- [History of Women in Transportation](#) by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, website: <http://education.dot.gov>.
- [Factsheet on Women in Trucking](#) by Layover.com.
- [Information from the American Trucking Association](#) from Truckline.com

Employment as a Truck Driver

Truck drivers transport everything from milk to automobiles for varying lengths of time and hours of the day. In general, truck drivers are responsible for:

- Picking up their cargo or "load" from a factory or company loading terminal
- Inspecting their truck for safety
- Making sure cargo does not shift during travel
- Driving cautiously to prevent accidents
- Completing forms and reports to document what cargo they carry, the condition of their truck and a log of their trip

Drivers must interact well with people since they often deal directly with a company's customers. For jobs as driver-sales workers, employers request the ability to speak well, a neat appearance, self-confidence, initiative, and tact. Employers also look for responsible, self-motivated individuals able to work with little supervision.

Each truck driver's responsibilities and work environment will vary, depending on:

1. Size of truck—light (XX tons or less) or trailer
 2. Type of cargo—route delivery (e.g., deliver many items to different locations) or transporting one item to one destination
 3. Distance traveled
- **Local or short "turnaround" drivers** deliver shipments to nearby sites, pick up another loaded trailer and return to their home on the same day. Local truck drivers may load or unload merchandise at the customer's place of business. Sometimes route drivers have **helpers** to assist with moving cargo.

Example

A local route truck driver generally pick up and deliver goods (e.g., packages) for a particular company (e.g., UPS or Federal Express) to customers, obtain signed receipts and payment merchandise, turn in receipts, money, records of deliveries made, and report any mechanical problems on their trucks.

- **Long distance or long haul drivers** have longer runs between many cities that can last a week or more. Longer runs may involve two drivers who "tag team" while driving the load. The federal government requires that long-distance truck drivers complete a report at the end of their trip or shift, which details the condition of the truck and the circumstances of any accidents. Long-distance truck drivers spend most of their working time behind the wheel but may also be required to load or unload their cargo after arriving at the final destination.



Example

- An **auto-transport truck driver** drives and positions cars on the trailers and head ramps and removes them at the dealerships.
- A **moving van truck driver** may pick up or deliver furniture or hire local workers to help them.

Work Environment—Truck drivers work in shifts at varying times of the day. They spend a lot of time seated.

Some drivers, such as route drivers, frequently leave the truck to deliver merchandise to customers and interact with them to obtain payment and encourage them to continue or increase their business with the drivers' company.

Long distance truck drivers travel for extended periods of time (such as 12-hour shifts) alone or with another "tag-team" driver. Many enjoy a sense of freedom you can't get from more traditional jobs.

Potential Employers—Once you complete training as a truck driver, you will be qualified to work with a variety of employers. Trucking companies employ about a third of all truck drivers in the U.S. Another 30 percent work for companies engaged in wholesale or retail trade, such as auto parts stores, oil companies, lumber yards, or distributors of food and grocery products. The remaining truck drivers are distributed across many industries including, construction, manufacturing, and services.

Self-Employment as a Truck Driver—Owner-operator truck drivers run their own trucking businesses and contract their services out to other companies or individuals. Less than 1 out of 10 truck drivers are self-employed. Of these, a significant number are owner-operators who either serve a variety of businesses independently or lease their services and trucks to a trucking company.

For more information about how to become an owner-operator truck driver visit:

- [Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association](#)
311 R. D. Mize Road, Grain Valley, MO 64029
(800) 444-5791 or (816) 229-5791
webmaster@ooida.com
- [Layover.com](#) for answers to [frequently asked questions about self-employment](#) as a truck driver, articles, and other truck driver business management resources.

Union Membership

Many truck drivers are members of the [International Brotherhood of Teamsters](#). Some truck drivers employed by companies outside the trucking industry are members of unions representing the plant workers of the companies for which they work.

Career Ladder

An entry-level truck driver can advance in her career and earn higher wages as she gains more on-the-job experience. As she acquires skill, "runs" offer increased earnings, preferred schedules or better working conditions.

A local truck driver may advance to driving heavy or special types of trucks, or transfer to long-distance truck driving. Working for companies that also employ long-distance drivers is the best way to advance to these positions. A few truck drivers may advance to dispatcher, manager, or traffic work in planning delivery schedules.



Below is a sample career path of a truck driver (listed from experienced to novice).

See the Truck Driver Training section on the Resources page to learn how you can advance in your job.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Start Here | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Light truck driver• Owner-operator• Manager• Dispatcher |
| Advance to Here | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long-distance truck driver |

Earnings

The stated earnings are based on data provided by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Handbook 2004* unless indicated otherwise. Earnings will vary by geographic location and union and non-union work. To determine the going wages for this occupation in your area, consult:

- Newspaper ads
- State or county employment offices (ask for their labor market data)
- Local employers
- Union locals (consult your phone book or the [union's national office](#))

Heavy Truck and Tractor Trailer—Median hourly earnings was \$16.11 in 2004.

- The middle 50% earned between \$12.67 and \$20.09 an hour.
- The lowest 10% earned less than \$10.18 an hour.
- The highest 10% earned over \$24.07 an hour.

Light or Delivery Services —Median hourly earnings were \$11.80 in 2004.

- The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.96 and \$ 16.00 an hour.
- The lowest 10 percent earned less than less than \$7.20 an hour.
- The highest 10 percent earned more than more than \$20.83 an hour.

Driver/Sales Workers —Median hourly earnings were \$9.66 in 2004.

- The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.94 and \$14.59 an hour.
- The lowest 10 percent were paid less than \$5.96 an hour.
- The highest 10 percent earned over \$19.81 an hour.

Local truck drivers tend to be paid by the hour, with extra pay for working overtime. Employers pay long-distance drivers primarily by the mile. The per-mile rate can vary greatly from employer to employer and may even depend on the type of cargo they are hauling. Some long-distance drivers are paid a percent of each load's revenue. Typically, earnings increase with mileage driven, seniority, and the size and type of truck driven. Most driver/sales workers receive commissions based on their sales in addition to their hourly wages.

Most self-employed truck drivers are primarily engaged in long-distance hauling. Many truck drivers are members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Some truck drivers employed by companies outside the trucking industry are members of unions representing the plant workers of the companies for which they work.



Training to be a Truck Driver

Women interested in obtaining entry-level work as a **truck driver helper** can gain the skills by informally observing and learning from experienced workers. To advance in the field and learn safety procedures, drivers need to obtain vocational training to become an entry-level truck driver. For more information on training for truck driving see our Resources page as well as <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos246.htm#training>.

[Truck Driving Schools Nationwide](#) from TruckInfo.net

[Truck Driver Training Schools by State](#) from TruckSchoolsUSA.com

Required Certification

In many states, a regular driver's license may be sufficient for driving light trucks and vans. However, some truck drivers are required to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) from the State in which they live if they:

- Drive trucks designed to carry at least 26,000 pounds (such as most tractor-trailers and bigger straight trucks)
- Operate trucks transporting hazardous materials regardless of truck size; (some groups such as firefighters, and snow/ice removers are exempt)

To obtain a CDL, you must pass a written test on rules and regulations, and then demonstrate you can operate a commercial truck safely. Licensed drivers must accompany trainees until they get their own CDL.

- Contact your State motor vehicle administrations to learn how to obtain a CDL
- Take a free online CDL Prep Test from Layover.com to get an idea of what questions are asked. (<http://www.layover.com/cdl.htm>).

New drivers sometimes start on panel, or other small "straight" trucks. As drivers gain experience and show competent driving skills, they may advance to larger and heavier trucks, and finally to tractor-trailers.

Advancement of truck drivers is generally limited to driving runs that provide increased earnings or preferred schedules and working conditions. For the most part, a local truck driver may advance to driving heavy or special types of trucks, or transfer to long-distance truck driving. Working for companies that also employ long-distance drivers is the best way to advance to these positions. A few truck drivers may advance to dispatcher, manager, or traffic work in planning delivery schedules.

Occupations related to truck drivers

Workers in other occupations with similar skills include:

- [Ambulance driver](#)
- [Bus driver](#)
- [Chauffeur and taxi Driver](#)
- [Material moving equipment operator](#)



Automotive Technician/Mechanic

Automotive technicians, also called "Automotive Service Mechanics," repair and service automobiles, and occasionally light trucks such as vans and pickups, with gasoline engines. Their typical tasks include:

- Examining vehicles and discussing with customers the nature and extent of damage or malfunction
- Planning work procedures, using charts, technical manuals, experience, and computers
- Disassembling units and inspecting parts for wear, using micrometers, calipers, and gauges
- Rebuilding parts such as cylinder heads and cylinder blocks

If you are a woman who likes to work with her hands, troubleshoot problems, and fix them, then this may be the job for you!

As of 2005, women represented 1.8% (17,000) of the total automobile technicians in the U.S. (954,000).¹¹

Read profiles of women working as automotive technicians

- **Experienced Technician**
[Ms. Fixit Keeps 'em Talking](#)
- **Self-Employed Technician**
[Under the Hood with Lucille](#)

Lucille Treganowan Trans
2244 Saw Mill Run Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15210
(412) 885-3399

Work Environment—Most automotive technicians work a standard 40-hour week, but many self-employed technicians work longer hours. To satisfy customer service needs, many technicians provide evening and weekend service. Generally, technicians work indoors in well-ventilated and well-lighted repair shops. Many automotive technicians use computers to diagnose technical problems.

Potential Employers—Automotive technicians held about 803,000 jobs in 2004.¹² The majority worked for:

- Retail and wholesale automotive dealers
- Independent automotive repair shops
- Gasoline service stations

Other potential employers include automotive service facilities such as:

- Department stores
- Automotive stores
- Home supply stores

¹¹ *Nontraditional Occupations for Women in 2005*. US Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Mar 2006. <http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2005.htm>

¹² *Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics*. US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook. 20 Dec 2005. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos181.htm>



A small number of automotive technicians maintained automobile fleets for taxicab and automobile leasing companies; federal, state, and local governments; and other organizations. About 20% of automotive technicians were self-employed.

Career Ladder

An entry-level automotive technician can advance in her career and earn higher wages as she gains more on-the-job experience and/or additional training (See page 3). Below is a sample career path an entry-level automobile technician can take to advance in her job (listed from experienced to novice). If you are currently an automotive technician, see the Training section to learn how you can advance in your job.

Automotive Technician

- Start Here**
- Student
 - Helper (apprentice)
 - Certified technician
 - Master technician
 - Service advisor

- Advance to Here**
- Service manager

Earnings for automotive technicians

Entry-Level—Median weekly earnings in 2004 were approximately \$624.

- The middle 50% earned between about \$452 and \$830 a week (about \$23,504-\$43,160 per year).
- The lowest 10% were paid less than \$348 a week.
- The highest 10% earned over \$1,049.

Experienced—Median annual salary was between \$70,000 and 100,000 in 1998.

Employed by Automotive Dealers and Independent Repair Shops—Many experienced technicians employed by automotive dealers and independent repair shops receive a commission related to the labor cost charged to the customer. Under this method, weekly earnings depend on the amount of work completed by the technician. Employers frequently guarantee commissioned technicians a minimum weekly salary.¹³

Training to be an Automotive Technician

Education Requirements

Many employers regard the successful completion of a vocational training program in automotive technician at a post-secondary institution as the best preparation for entry-level positions.

Women can obtain automotive technician training at several types of institution:

- High schools
- Community colleges
- Public and private vocational and technical schools

¹³ *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition*, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor 30 May 2006. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos181.htm>.



- Automobile manufacturers

When selecting a training provider, look for one that is certified by the [National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation](#) (NATEF) an affiliate of the [National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence](#) (ASE). NATEF certifies automobile technicians, collision specialists. NATEF also oversees the diesel and medium/heavy truck technical training programs offered by high schools, post-secondary trade schools, technical institutes, and community colleges.

Automobile manufacturers and their participating dealers sponsor two-year associate degree programs at 213 post-secondary schools across the nation.

Training Program Components—Employers seek people with strong communication and analytical skills for trainee technical jobs. Quality mathematics and computer skills are needed to study technical manuals to keep abreast of new technology. Trainees also must possess mechanical aptitude and knowledge of how automobiles work

It usually takes two to five years of experience to acquire adequate proficiency and reach the position of a journey-level service technician who quickly performs the more difficult types of routine service and repairs. However, graduates of better post-secondary technical training programs are often able to earn promotion to the journey level after only a few months on the job. An additional one to two years experience familiarizes the technician with all types of repairs. Difficult specialties, such as transmission repair, require another year or two of training and experience. In contrast, automotive radiator technicians and brake specialists, who do not need an all-round knowledge of automotive repair, may learn their jobs in considerably less time.

Training for Experienced Automotive Technician—Employers increasingly send experienced automotive technicians to manufacturer training centers. These training centers provide advanced training in repairing new models or special training in the repair of components such as electronic fuel injection systems or air-conditioners.

Occupations related to Automotive Technician

- Aircraft mechanics
- Boat engine mechanics
- Farm equipment mechanics
- Mobile heavy equipment mechanics
- Motorcycle mechanics and small-engine specialists
-

Assessment Tools for Nontraditional Employment

Most job training and apprenticeship programs use **standardized tools**, which assess participants' abilities and interests, in order to find the occupations for which the participants are best suited. However, some assessment tools may steer women away from nontraditional jobs if they contain gender-biased language and questions.

Understanding the common types of Assessment Tools

There are two common types of assessment tools:

- Vocational aptitude tests
- Interest assessment tools



Vocational Aptitude Tests

Vocational Aptitude Tests measure an individual's training capacity for various occupations by testing various types of skill. Generally, they include groups of tests each designed to test a specific ability. After a test is scored, test administrators use standard measures to determine which occupations are best-suited for an individual's various strengths.

Examples of Vocational Aptitude Tests

- DAT-Differential Aptitude Test
- GATB-General Aptitude Test Battery
- ASVAB-Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

Problems with Vocational Aptitude Tests

- **Personal Experience Influences Scores**—Vocational aptitude tests can be biased by the personal experience of the test taker. Women and girls who are not exposed to experiences that develop math or special skills may not test as well in these areas, even if they are interested or inclined to pursue related jobs (e.g., they were not encouraged to tinker with home appliances or take a shop class in high school).
- **Career Counseling Based on Biased Test Scores**—Career counselors and apprenticeship coordinators use these tests to provide career guidance. However, tests that contain gender biased language and questions often incorrectly assess a woman's aptitude. For example, if a woman does not demonstrate mathematical and spatial abilities on a test because it contains gender bias, a counselor may not encourage her to enter jobs requiring those abilities, such as trade and technical occupations.

Interest Assessment

Interest assessment tools are used to help an individual determine which occupation she would find most rewarding. Usually the individual reviews a list of activities and indicates which interest her. The test administrator then identifies which occupations are related to the selected activities.

Examples

- Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (SCII)
- Kuder Occupational Interest Survey (KOIS)
- Non-Sexist Vocational Card Search (VCS)
- Unisex Edition of the ACT Interest Inventory (UNIACT)
- Holland Self-Directed Search (SDS)

Problems

- Due, in part, to socialization, interest assessments often indicate that women prefer activities that involve people over those that involve things. Consequently, women are encouraged to enter people-oriented or "social" occupations such as receptionist, nurse, or childcare worker. These occupations are "pink collar" or women-dominated and low-paying with few benefits and opportunities for career advancement.
- Men often show no preference either way and are counseled to enter a broad range of occupations that relate to both people and things, often leading to a choice of higher-paying male-dominated occupations.



Evaluate assessment tools for biased language and questions

Gender-biased language and content of test items can inaccurately assess women's aptitudes and interests. Consequently, her score may be negatively affected. The bias can take many forms including:

- Underrepresentation of female characters in word problems and reading comprehension passages
- Usage of the pronoun "he" as a gender-neutral pronoun
- Examples that rely on "male-oriented" activities, such as sports
- GATB's "tool-matching" test which depicts objects resembling things found in workshops, with which many women lack experience

The following organizations study the evaluation of standardized tests and the development of unbiased tests:

- **The Consortium for Equity in Standards and Testing (CTEST)**
<http://www.bc.edu/research/csteep/CTESTWEB/start.html>
- **FairTest: National Center for Fair & Open Testing**
<http://www.fairtest.org/>

Use alternative approaches to assess women's skill and interest in nontraditional employment

Alternative ways to assess women's interests and aptitudes for nontraditional employment are suggested below.

1. Develop unbiased assessment tools that:

- Eliminate using masculine pronouns as "gender-neutral" pronouns
- Increase the representation of women and the range of activities in which they are depicted
- Include examples involving activities with which women are more familiar—for example, use sewing machine repair and reading sewing patterns to test for aptitude for or interest in activities such as carburetor repair and blueprints

2. Use unbiased assessment tools in conjunction with assessment interviews.

3. Offer training to help women "catch up" in skills if they demonstrate strong interest in an occupation but their scores did not demonstrate an "aptitude" for the job.



4. Use **alternative assessment tools**, such as a self-screening questionnaire.

There are several assessment tools that serve as alternatives to common standardized tools. The following tools are designed to test women's interest and ability to train and work in nontraditional occupations. Please contact the authors of the tools to learn more about how they developed the tool and how to credit them if you wish to replicate the tool for your program.

- **Nontraditional Employment for Women Career Assessment Survey**

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

website: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/default.htm>

Download this tool:

[PDF format](#) (links open new window).

- **Nontraditional Self-Assessment Survey**

Project for Homemakers in Arizona Seeking Employment

phone: (520) 621-3902 email: selinam@u.arizona.edu

website: <http://phase.arizona.edu/NONTRAD/index.htm>

Download this tool:

[Nontraditional Self-Assessment Survey](#)

- **Nontraditional: Is that For Me**

Green River Community College Women's Programs

website: <http://www.greenriver.edu/womensprograms/default.htm>

View this tool:

[Is a Nontraditional Career for Me?](#)

